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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are undernourished has increased from 250 million to 800 million (FAO 1996).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the nutritional status of the world's population. The World Bank (1992) has estimated that the cost of malnutrition to the world economy is \$100 billion per year. The World Health Organization (1992) has estimated that the cost of malnutrition to the world economy is \$100 billion per year. The World Bank (1992) has estimated that the cost of malnutrition to the world economy is \$100 billion per year. The World Health Organization (1992) has estimated that the cost of malnutrition to the world economy is \$100 billion per year.

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
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THE  
HUMAN MYSTERY IN HAMLET//  
AN ATTEMPT TO SAY AN  
UNSAID WORD

WITH SUGGESTIVE PARALLELISMS FROM THE  
ELDER POETS

*Harren*  
By MARTIN W. COOKE



NEW YORK  
FORDS, HOWARD, & HULBERT

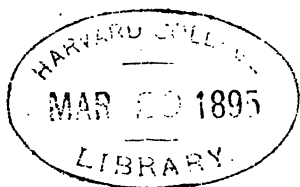
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*Prof. F. J. Child.*

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BY

MARTIN W. COOKE.

**Dedicated**

**TO MY LIFE-LONG FRIEND**

**JOHN R. HOWARD.**



## PREFACE.

---

IT would seem to be the duty of one who proposes to discuss the theme of "Hamlet" to begin with an apology. Every one who rises to speak in a debate which has continued for over one hundred years ought humbly to crave the indulgence of his audience and preface his remarks with a declaration of his willingness to vote in favor of a motion for the previous question. This I do.

My confidence, in submitting these investigations, is inspired by the trust that my readers will be like-minded to a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* who says:

"We ask not for a picture of the whole landscape of the soul, nor for a guide who

shall point out all its wonders. But we are glad to listen to every one who has travelled through the kingdom of Shakespeare. Something interesting there must be in the humblest journal, and we turn with equal pleasure from the converse of those who have climbed over the magnificence of the highest mountains there, to the lowlier tales of less ambitious pilgrims who have sat on the green and sunny knoll beneath the whispering tree and by the music of the gentle rivulet."

I have not aspired to the rôle of painter, guide, or mountain-climber; nor do I boast of sitting on the green and sunny knoll; but, in the effort to say an unsaid word of "Hamlet," I admit a weakness which has led me to emulate the zeal of the young anatomist of to-day who burns his midnight oil in the seemingly hopeless task of discovering an unknown tissue of the human body, and have lovingly and patiently studied this world-familiar theme for years. Furness says: "Upon no throne built by mortal hands has 'beat

so fierce a light' as upon the airy fabric reared at Elsinore." Yet even this baffling structure, approached without prejudice in favor of any theory, may have revealed something of its well-kept secret to a reverent observer.

I would prove a peace-maker harmonizing the fierce contestants who have quarreled over the problem. I would unite in friendly coöperation the champions of "feigned insanity" and of "real insanity" and their followers; and, allied with the smaller independent bands, I would re-explore this Castle of Hamlet, let into it if possible the light of day which has rather "beat upon" than penetrated it, and open to view the dingy, ghostly rooms where mystery has reigned supreme for centuries.

In short, I believe that, inspired by the achievements of earlier poets and philosophers, the writer of "Hamlet" had a definite end in view,—a grand theme, yet, like all grandeur, simple:

8      *The Mystery in Hamlet.*

and that it has puzzled the students of  
it because they have contemplated  
rather the marvels of its workmanship  
than the noble unity of its plan.

ROCHESTER, N. Y., *September*, 1888.

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## THE HUMAN MYSTERY IN HAMLET

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### I.

#### *Introduction.*

THE play of "Hamlet" is the masterpiece of the master-mind in literature. Its power to interest and entertain all men—the ignorant and the learned—is not possessed to the same degree by any other play of Shakespeare. The place it occupies in literature, its universal power to please, and the varied interpretations of it by the keenest critics, seem to justify renewed efforts to solve its mystery and discover its meaning and the secret of its power.

If one should read the criticisms of the play, with no other knowledge of the work, he would naturally infer that it was without meaning, and designed

by its author as a literary puzzle. Did Shakespeare purposely create a purposeless production? Or had he a consistent idea? Was he himself feigning insanity when he put forth this marvel of literature? "Hamlet" was one of the few plays that he re-wrote or revised. Shall we indict him for a second offence of fraud?

I have no sympathy with the suggestion that its author was merely a playwright, and wrote simply for ephemeral dramatic effect; or that he aimed only at popular applause and the filling of his purse without regard to the meaning or worth of his productions. It is a libel against the intelligence of the playgoers of the time, as well as an aspersion upon the author himself. Such a fling is the answer which not a few make to any effort to discover the theme of "Hamlet." It is apparent from the work itself, and the study it has evoked, that it plunges deep into the mysteries of the life of

man,—not his political or social life, but his spiritual life; and if the interpretations which deal with it as a simple production, illustrating some one phase of man's being, have been so varied, so contradictory and unsatisfactory, is it not wise to look for a broader meaning? It is fair to assume that Shakespeare had a definite theme before his mind, although Thomas Campbell says: "Shakespeare himself, had he even been as great a critic as a poet, could not have written a regular dissertation upon 'Hamlet.'" The true explanation, if it is ever discovered, will, doubtless, be consistent with *all* the facts of the delineation, and, at the same time, account for the universal admiration and intense interest which the play commands with the people of every nation, for its power over the coarsest as well as the finest and most delicate sensibilities, and for the diversity of views as to its meaning.

Volumes have been written to demon-

strate that "Hamlet" exhibits the vagaries of an insane person. Many contend that it represents the felicitous art of a skilful manœuvrer feigning insanity to confound his associates. Others claim that it represents genuine madness, resulting from the effort to counterfeit the reality. One critic, in 1796, published a treatise on the play, and in his second edition apologized for the typographical errors of the first by asserting that it was published in haste for fear some other person would anticipate his discovery of the true intent and meaning of the author; and his theory was that the play was designed as an attack on Mary, Queen of Scots! This idea was revived and refined, in 1880, by a wiseacre in Germany. Some have even discovered in "Hamlet" a religious or ecclesiastical intent. A German professor, in 1861, profoundly observed: "Protestantism will never fulfil its calling so long as its adherents are content to oppose the inexhaustible strength

and cunning of its ancient evil foe with the mere consciousness of their righteous cause, so long as they will not learn to unite with the virtues of the Christian the calm, dispassionate prudence and consequent energy of the man; so long as they continue to waste in foolish infatuation the power and aid which lie in their bosoms instead of using them." "This," he says, "is the end and aim of the lesson which 'Hamlet' teaches." In 1881 there was published in Philadelphia a book the object of which was to show that *Hamlet* was a woman masquerading in male attire.

It is a noticeable fact that the members of the medical profession who have written upon this subject, for the most part, have claimed that *Hamlet* was intended to be represented as actually insane. The most prominent adherents of this theory are: Dr. Ferriar (1813), Dr. Maginn (1836), Dr. Ray (1847), Dr. Kellogg of New York (1860). Dr. Conolly,

a distinguished physician of London, published the most celebrated discussion of the question in 1863. Cardinal Wiseman advocated the same theory in 1865, and declared that this controversy may be said to have been brought to a close by Dr. Conolly.

On the other hand, the advocates of the theory of feigned insanity are more celebrated in letters and in Shakespearean criticism. I mention Robert S. Mackenzie (1780), Thomas Campbell (1818), Boswell (1821). Richard Grant White (1870) contended that *Hamlet* was perfectly sane, and a man of very clear and quick intellectual perception. James Russell Lowell is of the same opinion. Dr. Stearns (1871) admits that the majority of readers of the present day believe *Hamlet's* madness to be real, but confesses himself to be in the minority. There are many other advocates of either side of this question, and it is candidly stated by many that the problem is insoluble.

Where so many distinguished critics differ so widely in respect to the meaning of an author's work, and neither class of the contestants finds general acceptance of its conclusions, may it not be fairly inferred that both are mistaken? I submit that neither of these theories can ever be established, and that both theories are erroneous.

Whether the aim of an author be to represent a person whose mind is disordered or one feigning insanity, he must of necessity employ the same means to accomplish his purpose. In either case the surroundings, the hero, his speech and action, would be precisely the same. As a work of art "Hamlet" answers one of the alleged purposes of its author exactly as well as the other. The advocates of the theory of genuine insanity and those who claim that the play is a representation of feigned insanity begin to differ only when they consider the intent of the author. The sole evidence of his purpose is the



play itself, and that is as consistent with the one theory as with the other. Therefore the discussion between these two classes of contestants is interminable, and the effort to establish either theory is idle. The problem is insoluble, assuming that it is to be confined to the establishment of one or the other of these propositions. Such assumption would justify the conclusion of Herman Grimm, that the tragedy as a work of art will forever have its effect, and—by the will of the poet—appear a riddle.

These contestants, logically, must agree upon the proposition that *Hamlet* was made to so act and speak as to manifest mental action—that, from the beginning to the end, Shakespeare designed to exhibit the workings of his hero's mind. A verdict of insanity, in any case, is a conclusion of fact drawn from apparent mental action. In judging of it, we note the external manifestations, infer from them the mental processes of the person

th whose sanity is under consideration, and,  
re- having thus learned the action of his  
wo- mind, we infer directly from it the fact  
nd of sanity or insanity as the case may be.  
is The external manifestations of mental  
ig action by a sane person and an insane  
1- person, however, may be identical, for  
i one may be feigning; while their mental  
processes cannot be identical. The con-  
clusion of fact as to the sanity or insanity  
of a person then cannot be drawn directly  
from his speech or conduct, or from both ;  
it must be drawn from the mental action  
they evince. It must be conceded, there-  
fore, by the advocates of either of these  
theories, that the design of the poet was,  
in the first instance, to make his hero  
manifest a variety of mental states,—  
mental agitations or struggles. As we  
have said, the contestants referred to  
begin to differ when they consider the  
truth, thought, or theme behind these  
mental struggles, states, or agitations  
within the hero, and intended to be im-

parted to the observer. They agree the conduct and discourse of *Hamlet* by Shakespeare's intention manifest mental action on his part as to lead or justify, the inference that he is insane, but one of the contestants concludes that the aim of the poet is accomplished by exhibiting the manifestations; and the other concludes that his aim is to exhibit by means of them an irrational mind. The point of agreement, however, is the significant thing: that the vehicle of the poet's thought, whatever that thought may be, is *mental agitation in the hero*.

I agree with both parties that the aim of the author, in the first instance, is to represent a great variety of mental states or mental struggles of the hero, and that, upon the assumption that the hero is a person or that he is designed to impersonate any individual, these mental states, so represented, would evidence insanity. But the view I shall present excludes the idea that in *Hamlet* Shakespeare rep-

resents any single individual or person. The office of the character is to exhibit typical mental struggles. *Hamlet* is not a person, he is a type. The mental struggles manifested are the vehicles of the poet's thought, it is true; but his thought is neither madness nor the external manifestation of madness. These mental operations constitute the most important part of the mirror which the poet causes to be held up to nature, but they are not the thing reflected.

It is not my purpose to combat the various theories which have been propounded, but I shall firmly insist that the poet so eminently gifted

“ with such large discourse  
Looking before and after,”

was not likely to have used “that capability and god-like reason” in what is concededly his greatest work, to build up a mere enigma without rational solution. Whatever be his theme, it must

be assumed that it is as grand as its  
ment; and the depth and intricacy  
the work must justify the search  
theme which justifies them.

Since this question of real or feigned  
insanity has been made the main element  
of mystery, if there be a way by which it  
may be eliminated from the problem, is  
not that simplify the matter? It seems  
so to me; and in that belief I propose  
to state what I think may be the solution  
of "Hamlet" which will absorb and account  
for this element while removing the  
disagreement from the discussion en-

## II.

### *Theme of the Play.*

**I**T is evident that the play of "Hamlet" was not designed as a representation of the life or experiences of any historical character; nor is it an historical representation of events which may have occurred. It is a dramatic poem. The problem is to discover its theme. The play is a mirror held up to nature. What is the reflected image? It is that of the interior spiritual life of man in his earthly environment. The mirror shows the presentment of that struggle which is common to the race, among the forces within the mind. *Hamlet* is made to exhibit mental agitation, the purpose or end of which is to show neither madness nor

the struggles of the hero with the palpable obstacles to his action, but, rather the conflict between his will and his passions; and thereby to illustrate that contention which, in the life of man in this world, is universal and ever active, which begins with his birth and ends only with his death. It is the spiritual tragedy of humanity—the strife between the higher forces of the being and the lower. The forces in conflict are shown as under law, however, and the final cause of the being and the struggles is not in this world.

The spiritual ruler within the mind is Reason; its executive is the Will; the subordinate forces are the Passions or emotions. The passions, like a turbulent democracy, determine action by their influence upon the reason and the will. The tendency of each passion is to determine the action of the being exclusively to its own gratification; and its abnormal activity brings it into conflict with every other passion which interferes with its dominance a

with the will as directed by reason. The conflict is violent or tame as the forces vary in strength in different persons and in the same person at different times.

The office of the will is to direct action in conformity with the prevailing forces which gain the mastery in this conflict; and, guided by reason, to regulate and direct the resultant of all the powers which influence it. The rational activity of the will in conformity with a perfect standard of conduct, and the discipline and control of the passions to secure such action, constitute the problems of morality, religion, and society.

The law, by obedience to which these ends are secured, is from without and is supernatural. It is the law of man's being, which his Creator enacted and enforces.

The play of "Hamlet" reflects the typical interior spiritual life of man in this world. It represents the being within whom a struggle or conflict is ever active from birth to death, between the forces



that are a part of his nature, each of which is seeking to control and determine the action of the being. In other tragedies, Shakespeare exhibits individual men; in this one—Man. In "Othello," he intensifies the passion of jealousy, makes it ever uppermost and dominant, and represents the individual under the influences and temptations of that single passion, in his struggles with the obstacles to his action. In "Macbeth," it is love of power, or ambition, which asserts authority and control within the man. In "Romeo and Juliet," we see how love, intensified and in full control over every other passion and the will, breaks down the being. *Coriolanus* is a man dominated by pride. In every other tragedy the mind of the hero is abnormal, controlled by a single passion or a group of passions; and Shakespeare makes the conduct and the speech and the results show the effects of the sway of such rulers in the mind. In "Hamlet," it

author has concentrated all tragedies. Here every passion is an active, powerful rebel against the will, which is made prominent, single, and constant; but, while every passion is intensified, no one is continuous or controlling to the neglect of others. In "Othello," "Macbeth," and "Romeo and Juliet," we have rapid, fierce, and violent action; for in each the influence to action is single. In "Hamlet," the forces which should determine action counteract and cripple each other; and, although the struggle is intense and violent within, the result is negative.

"With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action."

Most of the Greek plays turned on the representation of man's will hopelessly struggling, in calamities, against Fate. "Hamlet" shows the will of the same being, in his worldly estate, hopelessly contending with unconquerable powers within him, whose subordination is never reached in

this world. The life of man, in this world, does not justify his creation. Nothing here to be attained can explain or account for man's existence,—an argument that the aim and explanation of this life and its struggles will be found only in the “undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns.”

The play shows the being to be commanded by a Supernatural Power or will—a will not of this world. Man's will, so commanded, is opposed by contending passions which are as much a part of his nature as are his will and his reason, and each is a spiritual motive power; so a warfare arises, and peace is compassed only by the arbiter—death. The scene in which the ghost of *Hamlet's* father imparts his dread command is the dawn, behind which is the unknown; and, with the silence when “cracked that noble heart,” begins again the unknown night, when dreaded dreams may come, the apprehension of which gives us pause in life.

The Bible shows man, a being who struggles hopelessly in sin; the Saviour, a man obedient to the will of his Father, tempted in all points like as we are—yet without sin. He was what man should be in this world. The moral and spiritual conflict of humanity is grandly pictured by the apostle Paul, in the seventh chapter of Romans, illustrated most vividly in his own person. Shakespeare, uninspired, looked into the mind of man, explored the recesses of the human heart; and, in this play, he reveals and illustrates its secrets. The theme of "Hamlet" is the interior life of humanity in this world, striving to harmonize its actions with a supernaturally imposed law of rectitude, which it recognizes but ever fails to fulfil. It reveals a warfare which does not manifest itself in clash of swords or roar of cannon, but which rages, never ceasing, till the dissolution of the soul and body;—"the rest is silence."

To illustrate this struggle, Shakespeare

creates a hero seemingly having the highest advantages. He is a prince; the certain choice of the people as successor to his father the king, then dead. *Hamlet* is young; of matchless mind and body; keen in intellect; fully equipped with learning, strength, and skill; of marvellous insight; his affections already centred on the beautiful and accomplished *Ophelia*, who reciprocates his attachment; and, withal, he is "proud, revengeful, and ambitious," as he himself confesses. Shakespeare imposes on this hero—thus environed and thus equipped with intellect, strong passions, and delicate sensibilities—a commission, supernaturally imparted to him, to the performance of which all else must be, and is, made subordinate. This demands that the entire mind and all the affections, desires, and feelings—the whole nature of *Hamlet*—shall be guided by his reason and governed by his will, which are bent on executing the command. It puts into conflict with his

will, so guided, every passion, the gratification of which is impeded by, or forbidden in, the execution of the commission to revenge his father's murder. He is not prompted and controlled by his own passion of revenge. He is prompted to action by the command of the will of another, and that communicated supernaturally. The commission was not of extraordinary magnitude, except that it was for *Hamlet* to perform it. It was seemingly a simple act for him to do, but the design was to make him appear to be hampered and retarded by the contrarieties of his own feelings. The supreme determination to obey the command of his father's ghost was ever uppermost, although not unshaken by fear that he was deceived. His will was opposed, not by the difficulties of the act to be done, not by the physical obstacles in his way, nor by the calamities about him, but by the powers within him which refused to be controlled,—at times, weakening his faith in the

reality of the command of his father's ghost, and retarding his action even when his resolution was unshaken. It is not the endeavor to stab the king, nor the effort to revenge his father's murder, which challenges and enchains our admiration and courts our study; it is the struggle of *Hamlet's* will with—something! To discover the nature and scope of this struggle is the object of our study.

Shakespeare sees in man a ruling spirit—reason, whose executive is the will, and to which all other spiritual forces are, or should be, subordinate, and yet whose throne is not impregnable. Its subjects plot and struggle for the mastery. Any passion, unregulated and unrestrained, would destroy the system. Limited and controlled in their normal spheres, the passions produce a harmony of contending powers which is nature's greatest product. This is in reality no democracy. God made man in his own image. The destruction of the ruler is the de-

struction of all his subjects. This spiritual kingdom runs on in secret as a whirling world moves amidst unnumbered others of like structure, and is likewise governed from without. Its history is a conflict in darkness, illumined only by the light of revelation or illustrated by the poet's pen. The poet of the Golden Age painted man viewed in his relations to his fellow-man; the golden poet of the Elizabethan age opens to our view the spiritual life of man within himself. Virgil paints the building; Shakespeare pictures the occupants and the scenes within. "Hamlet" is the vehicle of the poet's thought. "The play's the thing" by which he reveals to others what he has seen in this spiritual world.

I will refer to some of the criticisms of "Hamlet," and endeavor to show that the true interpretation of the play, if it is such as I have surmised, accounts for their variety; and glean from them, as from expert witnesses, such proof as they



may furnish in support of this view. I can indulge only in a glance at them, for the criticisms which Germany alone has furnished would equip a library with books. By some the theme I suggest is hinted, or so nearly stated that it may be claimed as not inconsistent with their views. A little more than a hundred years ago, the great scholar Lessing brought to the attention of his countrymen the riches of Shakespeare; and, notably, the play of "Hamlet" took possession of the German mind. It amounted to nothing short of enthusiasm,—enthusiasm which never waned. Furness says: "Given a printing-press on German soil (and the printing-press is indigenous there) and, lo! an essay on 'Hamlet.'" The whole German mind seems to have been inoculated with the matter of "Hamlet;" and the disease always has been epidemic.

"And now remains  
That we find out the cause of this effect."

Is it a cunning monster that has so agitated this intellectual sea? Or is it a creature of such delicate and mysterious anatomy that its structure has been destroyed by every effort at dissection?

If this play is such a mirror as we have suggested, and was designed and well calculated to reflect the spiritual struggles of man in this world, it would be natural to expect that he who looks into it with no preconception of its character, so that the reflected image pictured on the retina of his "mind's eye" is undistorted by a defective vision or imperfect medium, will see *himself* reflected; and, in the reader's heart, the struggling prince will find a sympathy born of fellow-feeling. Herein is the secret of the universal interest in this play. The simple spectator finds a response to his own struggles. For such a view the play was designed. The critic's eye may find what he is looking for (as the believer in any creed may find seeming support to his doctrine in the

Bible), but he may, at the same time, fall far short of Shakespeare's thought.

Again, assuming that this view is the true one, and that the play is a perfect work of art, it would naturally be expected that any one who looked into it with the predetermination that it was designed to reflect the characteristics of an individual—a possible person—would see reflected, either his own conception of some character he imagines represented; or, discovering inconsistencies, he would judge the person or character supposed to be represented to be insane, or to be an impossible consistent character except upon the hypothesis that he is feigning madness.

Hudson, speaking of the diversity of opinions in regard to "Hamlet," and admitting that there are facts in the delineation which, considered by themselves, would sustain any one of the varied views, but none of them reconcilable with *all* the facts taken together, says:

"All agree in thinking of *Hamlet* as an actual person."

This supposition, that *Hamlet* is an actual or possible person, concentrates the attention upon *Hamlet* the individual, and diverts it from what "Hamlet" the play is representing. Whereas, *Hamlet* is a player, made to act and speak as a man would act and speak under the influence of mental agitation, to the end, not of exhibiting his powers of acting or himself, but of discovering the mental struggles which seem to induce his speech and action. We look into his conduct and speech, or, rather, the mental agitation they evidence, as into a mirror, and we see reflected the spiritual struggle. His speech and action are the external indications—effects—of the internal conflict. He is imitating humanity, and he is not the handiwork of one of "nature's journeymen, that imitates humanity abominably." Shakespeare would not have the spectator look at the instru-

ment he employs, but "rather the necessary question of the play considered." He employs the hero, not to exhibit himself, but to reflect his creator's thought. The idea that *Hamlet* is an actual person—a possible individual—and that Shakespeare designed to represent such a person, is inconsistent with this proposition. *Hamlet* is the poet's vehicle, his instrument, by which he makes known his own thoughts. He is not exhibiting *Hamlet*—a man—but using him as a mirror to reflect his great theme—Man. The fundamental error of the criticisms that we shall notice, and, in fact, of nearly all the dissertations on the play, seems to me to be the assumption that this is the representation of an actual person or character.

See how it strikes Taine, the poet-critic of France: "You recognize in him a poet's soul, made not to act, but to dream, which is lost in contemplating the phantoms of its own creation, which

sees the imaginary world too clearly to play a part in the real world; an artist whom evil chance has made a prince, whom worse chance has made an avenger of crime, and who, designed by nature for genius, is condemned by fortune to madness and unhappiness. *Hamlet* is Shakespeare, and at the close of a gallery of portraits, which have all some features of his own, Shakespeare has painted himself in the most striking of them all." The patriotic poet, Freiligrath, with inspiration kindled by his poetic contemplation of the Fatherland, its trials, fears, griefs, and joys, its hopes and struggles, sees the fond object of his dreams and subject of his song, and so he sings: "*Hamlet* is Germany." The politician sees illustrated the conflict of parties. The German student sees the German half-professor. The theologian sees the struggle of Protestantism with Catholicism or the strife of sects. The common thinker demands of Garrick the restoration of the

grave-scene, for to him the image is defective, wanting the element of the vanity of life. The medical expert sees the working of a mind diseased, the abnormal action of an unbalanced and disordered intellect. The philosopher recognizes the futility of his own principles and tenets when they come to cope with life's practical problems.

Among the Germans there have been many striking results of a study of this play. Goethe says it is clear to his mind that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. He says: "In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak-tree, planted in a costly vase which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces. A beautiful, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear

nor throw off; every duty is holy to him, —this, too hard. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind."

But these windings, turnings, agonizings, advancings, recoilings, and remindings are the effects of the internal struggles of the mind. Their reality, intensity, and continuity constitute the theme of the poem, and their outward effects constitute the mirror. Goethe beautifully and accurately describes the mirror, but loses sight of the reflected image. The great deed to be done represents the Control of the Passions. The soul upon which the deed is laid is the Will, guided by reason. The power which lays the deed upon the soul is the Supernatural.

Of the German theories we have given Goethe's first, although it is the most familiar, for it is the result of careful study



by the author of "Faust;" and, as a model of criticism, it was confessedly the "wonder and despair" of such a man as Macaulay. Further, it shows with the context that Goethe regarded *Hamlet* as an actual person, even speculating upon the early life of *Hamlet* before he went to Wittenberg. In later years Goethe, it seems, questioned this earlier interpretation, for in 1828 he writes of the play: "After all is said, *that* weighs upon one's soul as a gloomy problem."

Herder says: "This work contains reflections upon life, the dreams of youth, partly philosophical, partly melancholy, such as Shakespeare himself (rank and station put out of view) may have had. Every still soul loves to look into this calm sea in which is mirrored the universe of humanity, of time and eternity."

L. Boerne (1816) said: "Had a German written 'Hamlet' I should not have wondered at the work. A German needs

but a fair legible hand. He makes a copy of himself, and 'Hamlet' is done."

Eduard Gans (1834) says: "If Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' is to be characterized in a word, it is the tragedy of the Nothingness of Reflection, or, as even this phrase may be varied, it is the tragedy of the Intellect."

Dr. Hermann Ulrici (1839) says: "In 'Hamlet' we behold the Christian struggling with the natural man, and its demand for revenge, in a tone rendered still louder and deeper by the hereditary prejudices of the Teutonic nations. . . . The mind of *Hamlet* . . . is throughout struggling to retain the mastery which the judgment ought invariably to hold over the will, shaping and guiding the whole course of life. . . . Whenever *Hamlet* does an act, it is not upon the suggestion of his deliberate judgment, but hurried away by the heat of passion or by a momentary impulse."

Dr. G. G. Gervinus (1849) says: "We

feel and see our own selves in him, and, in love with our own deficiencies, we have long seen only the bright side of this character," etc.

Dr. Eduard Vehse (1854) says: "'Hamlet' is the drama that utters the most startling, the most touching, the saddest truths over this deep riddle, this fearful sphinx, called life,—a drama that reveals to us what a heavy burden this life is when a profound sorrow has robbed it of all charm."

Hermann Freiherr von Friesen (1864) says: "Let us now, in conclusion, once more consider that, however our weak words may attempt to elucidate the great mystery of these world-wide complications, we must nevertheless bow down before its depth and unfathomableness. What is here felt and wrought out and contemplated, the unconscious germ of it all dwells in the still breast of universal humanity, and therefore this tragedy strikes with equal power the coarse strings of the

least sensitive, as well as the finer and more tender sympathies of the more susceptible."

Prof. Hebler (1864) says: "'*Hamlet* is Germany,' in a most indubitable sense, in that the German attempts at elucidating 'Hamlet' are the contemporaneous history of the German mind in miniature."

"No-Philosopher" (1867) says: "It is not in 'Hamlet' as in other pieces of Shakespeare's, the history of a single passion, the development of a few mental qualities, good or bad, that is set before us. In this drama Shakespeare sets himself a greater task: to make clear and intelligible, from the whole structure of the piece, a human soul in its totality, in its fluctuating action, and in the finest vibrations by which the nerves are thrilled."

Herman Grimm (1875) says: "A complete contradiction has been embodied in 'Hamlet,' and a 'perfect contradiction remains alike mysterious to the wise and to the foolish.' So surely as it is proved

that such was the intention, so surely will this tragedy, as a work of art, forever have its effect, and, by the will of the poet, appear a riddle."

Coleridge (1808) says: "I believe the character of *Hamlet* may be traced to Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. Indeed, that this character must have some connection with the common fundamental laws of our nature may be assumed from the fact that *Hamlet* has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered."

Again (1812) Coleridge says: "Shakespeare intended to portray a person in whose view the external world and all its incidents and objects were comparatively dim and of no interest in themselves, and which began to interest only when they were reflected in the mirror of his mind."

William Hazlitt (1817) says: "It is *we* who are *Hamlet*."

Macaulay says of Shakespeare's works:

"There man appears as he is, made of a crowd of passions, which contend for the mastery over him in turn, . . . for it is the constant manner of Shakespeare to represent the human mind as lying, not under the dominion of one despotic propensity, but under a mixed government, in which a hundred powers balance each other."

If it should be supposed that Shakespeare did not intend to represent in *Hamlet* a person, a real or possible character; and, that the hero was a typical being of the author's creation, not created for the purpose of exhibiting himself or some person, but, as it were, an actor, whose office it should be to manifest Shakespeare's conception of spiritual Man through the mental agitation revealed by his speech and actions, the different views seemingly so discordant could be harmonized, accounted for, or refuted; those who advocate *Hamlet's* insanity would appear in error; and the alleged insanity, either feigned or actual, no

. . .

more established than the insanity of any player who interprets many emotions in the same play. Every argument in favor of the theory of feigned insanity is an argument that *Hamlet* is an actor; for feigning is acting. If Boswell and Dr. Conolly should come upon a man rehearsing his part in some tragedy for the stage, and, ignorant of his identity and purpose, should stop to consider his mental status, Dr. Conolly might claim the man to be insane; and Boswell, admitting that his speech and action indicated insanity, might, with reasonable argument, claim the person to be feigning madness. The revelation that he was an actor rehearsing his part would clearly discover the error of both. They might then agree, readily enough, that the speech and action of the stranger were designed to show the struggle with the passion then made to appear uppermost in the mind of the actor.

The continuous power over *Hamlet*,

under all circumstances, was the command or control from without, stimulating the resolution—the will to revenge his father's death. The poet places him in different situations, each calculated to stimulate some passion in his own mind in opposition to the execution of this constant resolve, and to force the struggle with the special passion thus for the time being made prominent and active. The speech and action of *Hamlet* are the effects produced by these struggles, and these effects are the manifestations of the internal agitation which the poet seeks to portray. So we must not regard him as a person, but as an actor called to play many parts in the same play, and all the parts so combined as to present a view of the poet's thought, which was: the internal, spiritual struggle between the higher elements of man's nature and the lower—the constant and continuous state of man in this world. The warfare is principally in skirmishes and in



sallies, but is constant, bitter, and uncompromising. *Hamlet's* sanity or insanity is not a question to be argued. He is an actor. Shakespeare created him and taught him how to act. He did not take a player and make of him a prince, but he took a prince and made of him an actor. The hero might truthfully say with *Clarice* in the play of "Comedy and Tragedy": "I am everybody—I am nobody." He who best plays the part impersonates most accurately Shakespeare's player—*Hamlet*.

It must not be forgotten that we are speaking of a poet whose insight was little short of inspiration, and that we are treating of that work which was the result of his great care. He did not create this character to show his creative power, but to impart some idea of which this creation was the vehicle of communication. In other works, he has clearly intensified and made constant as the ruling power in his hero some single pas-

sion or group of passions ; in this one, he seems to have reversed the method and made constant and predominant the will, apparently under law, and represented it in conflict with all other motive forces of the being.

Cole, the painter, conceived the idea of putting on canvas his poetic thought called the Voyage of Life. He grouped together trees, rocks and clouds, hills and streams, and with his brush he told his thought. The attempt to show that such a combination is a copy from an actual scene in nature would be like the impossible one of showing that Shakespeare's character of *Hamlet* has a possible counterpart that matches all his moods.

Such an actual person as *Hamlet* is as impossible as a woman who should possess the perfection of a Greek statue of antiquity, modelled upon the combined excellences of a great number of different persons ; yet the statue will none the less be regarded as a type of

womanly physique. A real *Macbeth* might easily be; a real *Hamlet*, never yet all the world sees humanity typified in *Hamlet*.

If I am right in my surmise as to the theme of this play, the play itself should bear out the theory. Let us briefly examine it in this light.

### III.

#### *The Theme Illustrated.*

IN the view we have taken, the play should exhibit (1) the reality, the fact, of the Supernatural and its control, the law which is above man's will; (2) the theatre of man's life,—this world; (3) the reality of the forces within, their mutual antagonism, and their relation to the will; (4) the manifested effects of such a struggle within the mind as we have indicated; and (5) the fruitless result of the struggle so far as this life is concerned.

In the first scene, the reality of the Supernatural is manifested. The whole atmosphere of the scene is charged with the supernatural element. Every word and its appropriate action reveal this.

The spectator's attention is first drawn to a mystery impending, indicated by the mental agitation of *Bernardo*. His apprehension of the appearance of the ghost is perceived at every step. *Francisco* is entirely ignorant of the ghost. *Bernardo* and *Marcellus* are officers who have seen it and believe in its reality. *Horatio* is the scholar and sceptic who refuses to believe upon the evidence of the officers. This scene is clearly designed to indicate the nature of the supernatural appearance and the effect of its appearance upon the minds of these characters; and, by the conversion and conviction of *Horatio*, to emphasize its reality. It furnishes a clue for the interpretation of the entire play.

We will imagine Shakespeare's instructions to the players in the rehearsal of the first scene. Shakespeare played the part of the *Ghost*, and we may presume that he saw to it that in the scene where he appeared the actors were required to

“suit the action to the word, the word to the action.” The curtain rising should reveal a representation of Elsinore; and upon the side, but well to the front, a platform before the castle. The stage lights should be turned low. *Francisco* should be upon the platform, walking back and forth. He is to act the part of a sentinel who has nearly completed an entirely uneventful night-watch. He should appear as a soldier thus employed, anxious only for relief from duty; and ignorant of any unnatural or exciting surroundings. The scenery should be so set that *Bernardo* may approach in the darkness unnoticed by *Francisco*, and not visible to him, but in the view of the audience. *Bernardo*, while approaching, and before he sees *Francisco*, apparently hearing footsteps, should stop, manifest his fear by his action; and, in an excited but suppressed voice or loud whisper, exclaim: “Who’s there?” *Francisco*, whose attention is arrested by this

strange challenge, stops; and, in measured, natural tones, demands, as from an unseen and unknown person: "Nay, answer *me*; stand, and unfold *yourself*." It should appear that neither can see the other, and the voice of *Bernardo*, as I have intimated, should be such as not to reveal his identity. *Bernardo*, on hearing the demand of the sentinel, and, appearing by his action to recognize that the apprehension which caused him unwittingly to disguise his voice was unwarranted, should deliver the password deliberately, as he now perceives that it was the step of the sentinel that had startled him, and he should say, in a natural tone of voice: "Long live the King!" *Francisco*, hearing his voice in its natural tone, and apparently inferring from it who it is that has spoken—the scene and his action still making it appear that he cannot see him—says, in tone either of inquiry or exclamation: "Bernardo?" *Bernardo* promptly responds:

“He;” and should immediately approach, in plain view of the sentinel he comes to relieve. The darkness, the occasion, the manifestation of fear, and the excited, unnatural voice of *Bernardo*, the change of voice, the recognition from it and the inquiry to verify the supposition from the voice that it is *Bernardo*, are intended to indicate to the spectator that there is something mysterious in the situation—a mystery evidenced by these circumstances and the action of *Bernardo's* mind. *Francisco* unwittingly throws a light upon the situation by his observation: “You come most carefully upon your hour.” *Bernardo* replies: “’Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.” The strange action and speech of *Bernardo*, followed by this suggestion, his mind passing from a state of fear to a desire of haste for *Francisco* to leave him there alone, when he was just now startled by the sound of a footstep, again indicate to the audience that there



is a mystery, and that *Francisco* is not cognizant of it, nor interested in it. The state of *Francisco's* mind, in contrast with that of *Bernardo*, is shown by his remark in reply: "For this relief, much thanks; 'tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart." The spectator perceives that he is not concerned about anything but his own comfort and condition, although *Bernardo's* mind is agitated. *Bernardo* again reveals the state of his own mind by his inquiry: "Have you had—quiet—guard?" This should be delivered in a hesitating manner. *Francisco's* prompt answer, "Not a mouse stirring," apparently calms the fear of *Bernardo* and convinces him that *Francisco* has not seen the ghost, and so he follows with, "Well, good-night,"—adding after a slight pause, and as if the result of his suddenly realizing the possibility of the reappearance of the ghost—"If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus, the rivals of my watch, bid them make haste." The spectator—

thus far having seen the officer *Bernardo* manifesting agitation in his mind different from what would be expected of an officer coming to relieve a sentinel in the ordinary routine of his duties—is prepared for a revelation of something which is disturbing the thoughts of *Bernardo*, but which is unknown to *Francisco*.

Immediately, however, *Francisco* should appear to be listening, and should move away from *Bernardo*, while he observes: "I think I hear them," and calls out: "Stand, ho! Who is there?" *Horatio* (apparently assuming that he and *Marcellus* are challenged by *Bernardo*—expecting them) should answer in a light and unconcerned manner: "Friends to this ground." He would hardly thus answer the challenge of a sentinel he did not suppose was expecting him. *Marcellus*, who believes in the ghost and is conscious of its possible proximity, should in solemn voice add: "And liegemen to the Dane." This interview should be remote from *Bernardo*

and out of his hearing (his by-play indicating that he does not hear), and the reply of *Horatio* and the remark of *Marcellus* should be made before they come near enough to discover that the challenging sentinel is not *Bernardo*. The reply of *Horatio* (who shortly is seen to have expressed his disbelief in the ghost) should be in a tone and manner indicative of the absence of reverence, while the speech of *Marcellus* should be of such solemnity as might be expected of a person conscious of the probable presence of the ghost of the king. *Marcellus*, upon nearing *Francisco*, who says, "Give you good-night," suddenly discovers that the challenge was not from *Bernardo*, as he had expected, and upon this he opens his speech with the exclamation "O," and says: "O, farewell, honest soldier; who hath relieved you?" He answers: "Bernardo hath my place;" and then again, "Give you good-night." *Francisco* then departs. The contrast between the state of *Francisco's* mind

and that of *Bernardo* should be maintained throughout, as well as the contrast between the light-hearted, sceptical, and merry state of *Horatio's* mind and the solemnity of that of *Marcellus*.

*Marcellus* now calls out for *Bernardo*, who should not be then in sight: "Holla! Bernardo!" and *Bernardo* again reveals his anxiety by an excited inquiry, and in the manner of a call to persons hidden from view by the darkness—"Say, what, is Horatio there?" *Horatio* should again discover his state of mind by the reply: "A piece of him." Thereupon the three come within sight of each other, and the anxious *Bernardo* says: "Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus." His demonstration of satisfaction in this speech should be in a manner to show the relief of mind which their presence gives him. It is already evident to the spectator that here is one mind excited, anxious, and apprehensive, calmed and relieved by the presence of the two new-comers, of whom

one is light and flippant, and the other solemn and reverential.

That there is some mysterious occasion for this is apparent, and *Horatio* is ready with the inquiry—the beginning of his inquiry, “What,” indicating his inference from *Bernardo’s* action in welcoming them that *Bernardo* had seen the ghost again—“What, has this thing appeared again to-night?” The reference to it as “this *thing*” and the manner of saying it manifest his unbelief. *Bernardo* answers: “I have seen nothing.” In the remainder of the scene the ghost appears and “harrows” *Horatio* with “fear and wonder,” by its appearance, converting his mind suddenly and effectually. While *Horatio* is giving what is intended by the author as a false explanation of the ghost, it reappears, its incorporeal nature is demonstrated, and its majestic character confessed. The omission of any communication by the ghost to those for whom it had no message, and the full conversion of *Horatio*, the scholar

and sceptic, coupled with what has preceded, reveal and postulate the first element of the drama, the *reality*—the fact—of the Supernatural in the attitude of power and with some relation to human beings; but what its relation is, is not declared. That is reserved for its appropriate place. It is “something more than fantasy.” It is the spirit of the Majesty of Denmark—the *ruler*—appearing from another world.

This scene furnishes one element for the interpretation of the play. It is a mirror-constructed of mental agitation and action on the part of the actors, and it reveals to the spectator the ~~reality~~ of the supernatural, spiritual ruler, a ruler with

“the front of Jove himself:

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command.”

We have seen the walking spirit of the king, but he has no voice for *Horatio* or the officers. He hies him away at the crowing of the cock. His voice and command are for *Hamlet*.

The second scene reflects the natural world, the theatre of man's natural life.

Here we have the false-hearted murderer feigning grief, usurping power and rule, now wedded with his "sometime sister," preparing for war; and the libertine, *Laertes*, home from France, and longing for return to the scenes of revelry.

Then the poet introduces the hero, who here unveils his mind, and casts a light on the tumult of passions. The wretched condition of things he finds at his late father's court inspires *Hamlet's* commentary on the "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable uses of this world."

" 'Tis an unweeded garden  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in  
nature,  
Possess it merely."

The beautiful form is dignified and pleasing to the natural eye, though clothed in "nighted color," and showing grief by "veiled lids." But it is not outward demonstration that can denote him truly,

"Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected 'haviour of the visage."

He has, as he says :

"That *within* which passeth show."

The distracted mind, tossed and tortured by tumultuous passions, cries for deliverance. Grief, hatred, filial love, distrust, reverence, ambition, fear, are shown in raging tumult tearing the heart and the mind of the melancholy prince, as yet unconscious of his father's spirit in arms. He longs for dissolution of his life, and soliloquizes with pitiful agony :

"O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw and dissolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O  
God!"

This is a picture of desolation and despair, and the only refuge for the distracted soul seems to be in dissolution and annihilation. The contending passions here introduced are the forces with



which the poet intends to put the will in conflict. But the list is not yet complete. The suspicion of foul play is aroused in *Hamlet's* interview with *Horatio* and *Marcellus* concerning the ghost's appearance, which follows the soliloquy. And in the next scene the author introduces and gives special prominence to still another and more powerful passion. He has placed in contrast the counterfeit sorrow of the king and queen with the genuine grief of the prince, and he again employs the same art by putting the affections of a libertine into contrast with the pure and true love of *Hamlet* for *Ophelia*. It is of the passion of love so revealed in this scene that the author makes *Polonius* say, later :

"Whose violent property fordoes itself  
And leads the *will* to desperate undertakings,  
As oft as any *passion* under heaven  
That does afflict our natures." [Act II. Sc. I.

The glimpses we have already had into this matchless mirror have revealed (1) the spirit of the king and father in arms ;

(2) the theatre of man's life in this world, which appears a world of falsehood, deceit, murder, lust, and war; (3) the mind of the hero occupied by and filled with conflicting and tumultuous passions, special importance being given to the passion of love. These are the influences to action which are to cope with the executive power yet to be developed. The *will* of the hero must now be stimulated and so governed that its conflict with the passions shall be certain and constant.

Thereupon the *Ghost* and *Hamlet* are brought together and a command is imparted to the hero, the execution of which he recognizes as involving the subordination of every passion, and he is made to promise :

" Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,  
That youth and observation copied there;  
And thy *commandment* all *alone* shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain,  
Unmixed with baser matter : Yes, by heaven ! "

This command is *law* to *Hamlet*. It is the expressed *will* of a higher being, and it immediately puts his own will, that must secure the execution of the mandate, into conflict with every passion which would seek to determine, direct, or govern his action for its own gratification. It is not *Hamlet's* passion of revenge that is to rule his mind and determine his action, but it is the command of his father's spirit; to obey his father's will is his duty; and that duty, to him, is a holy one.

The situation is thus intended to force upon the stage, as the essential theme of the drama, the contest of *Hamlet's* will with every obstacle in the way of the execution of the command; the obstacles being, not the physical impediments to the killing of the king, but the forces within *Hamlet's* own mind, acting in opposition to his will.

Here ends the first act. In it we have seen—let us repeat—the power without and above; the theatre of man's life and ac-

tion; the door thrown open to reveal contending occupants whose natural ruler is the will; and, finally, the will made single by the command from without. The forces have been marshalled, the field selected, and the contest must begin. Our author does not tarry. The struggle is entered upon in the next act.

The chiefest passion of the hero is the first to challenge the supremacy of his will. The poet again indulges in his habit of putting in comparison the true with the false. He has given us the stern command of the *Ghost to Hamlet* and the genuine spirit of filial reverence and obedience. He has given us in contrast the precepts of the sage *Polonius* to his son *Laertes*—precepts full of worldly wisdom. He now opens to our eyes the wayward life of *Laertes* and his career in France of disobedience and licentious living, in the interview between *Polonius* and *Reynaldo* which opens the first scene of the second act;—thus, in the same scene, contrasting

the exhibition of obedience with disobedience, and the illicit action of *Laertes* with what immediately follows—the revelation of the first great struggle between *Hamlet's* will and his pure passion for *Ophelia*. We are not shown the hero with the lady of his love. *Ophelia* describes to her father the pantomime enacted in her closet.

We last saw *Hamlet* parting from his friend *Horatio* when he took upon himself the dread command. Now we hear of him from the lips of his beloved one. Alone, in her closet, he appeared before her,—

“ Lord Hamlet,—with his doublet all unbrac'd ;  
No hat upon his head ; his stockings foul'd,  
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle ;  
Pale as his shirt ; his knees knocking each  
other ;  
And with a look so piteous in purport  
As if he had been loosed out of hell  
To speak of horrors,—he comes before me.”

She tells in impassioned language how

he took her by the wrist and held her hand, and she says:

“ He rais’d a sigh so piteous and profound  
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
And end his being : that done, he lets me go.”

This is the picture which the author holds up to the spectator. What a struggle! Torn and racked by his love for *Ophelia*, what a conflict must have been raging within him to have brought this refined “courtier’s eye” to such a plight! His paleness and trembling knees and disturbed attire obtained before he came into the presence of his soul’s affection. The passion of love was in conflict with the purpose of his soul and sought to change it. This was not weakness of the will. *Hamlet’s* will-power was giant-like to wrestle thus with such a love—the love of “more than forty thousand brothers.”

This view is confirmed rather than shaken by the explanation which the

blundering *Polonius* makes that *Hamlet* is mad from the pangs of love repulsed. It would not be artistic for the poet to make one of his characters truthfully explain the conduct of the prince. The shallow *Polonius*, particularly, could not be allowed thus early to pluck out the heart of *Hamlet's* mystery, much less to publish it to the court. It would impeach the author of weakness to suppose that *Polonius* hit the mark in his interpretation of the situation for the information of the spectator, who is well aware of what *Polonius* is made to appear most ignorant of. What is passing in the *mind* of *Hamlet* is made to appear the great concern of all about him.

The next scene shows the subterfuge first adopted by the king to learn, as he says:

"Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him  
thus,

That, open'd, lies within our remedy."

*Guildenstern* and *Rosencrantz*, being impatiently dismissed upon their mission,

*Polonius* appears. The business of the state—the report of Volteman and Cornelius—is hastily dispatched that heed may be given to the prating report of the prime minister as to the cause of the mental distemper of the prince, and then follows the plot to “loose his daughter to him”—to confirm *Polonius*' views.

*Polonius* plies *Hamlet* to find out what is in his mind. *Hamlet* throws dust in his eyes by the use of words all wittily expressed, but they confirm *Polonius*' erroneous conviction that the prince is mad. The dialogue, so far from convicting *Hamlet* of insanity, evinces a wit that any sane man might envy. Of the interview with *Guildestern* and *Rosencrantz*, which follows, the same is even more true. They seek to know his thoughts, but *Hamlet* forces their confession that they were sent for to this end. This whole scene, till the players appear, points always to the central thought—the state, condition, and action of the *mind* of



*Hamlet.* The attention of the audience is always brought back to the scenes *therein* enacted.

The players then appear. In the recitation in response to *Hamlet's* demand for a "passionate speech" we have the counterfeit of passion—*Hamlet* calls it a "dream of passion"—in contrast with the genuine struggle which we see in *Hamlet's* own mind, which follows the departure of the players; for the prince makes it a text to denounce his own weakness and inaction. He is made to seem not to know his own malady, for he says to *Guildestern* and *Rosencrants*:

"I have of late (but, wherefore, I know not) lost  
all my mirth."

Later on he says:

"I do not know  
Why yet I live to say, this thing's to do;  
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength and  
means,  
To do't."

Withal he was then under the influence of his own suspicions, and to confirm them he plans the play, to "catch the conscience of the king."

In the next act we have the soliloquy commencing:

"To be or not to be."

This is a glimpse of the world beyond,—"the undiscovered country." It is the ever-recurring query: Does death end all? No, "'tis a sleep, where dreams may come." That insight which reads the thoughts of the king, his minister, and the courtiers, cannot pierce the veil of death. Whatever that "something after death" may be, it has relation to the acts, omissions, and struggles this side of the grave. The dread of it "puzzles the will." In the interview with *Ophelia* which follows the soliloquy, the revelation is made to *Hamlet* that the lovely, charming, pure, and pious "rose of May" has been contaminated by the murderer's

### *The Mystery in Hamlet.*

arts, and that she has been led to submit herself to be his willing tool; and so he warns her to fly from the contamination of this world and seek refuge from it,—not by suicide, but in a nunnery. His soliloquy had just revealed that death was not the refuge to be sought. The commentary is not on *Ophelia*, but on her surroundings.

In the dialogue with *Horatio* which follows the speech to the players, he sounds the praises of his friend in terms which eloquently proclaim him a model man whose will and judgment reign peacefully over his passions; and so he declares *Horatio* to be the true ideal of manhood, and concludes his encomium as follows :

“ Give me that man  
That is not *passion's slave*, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee.”

His next words are (I make them mine):

“ Something too much of this.”

If we have thus far matched our theory with the play, it is safe to trust Shakespeare's consistency for the remainder of the demonstration, and we will leave this branch of the inquiry: although it "tempts us sore" to note the praying king's remorse and *Hamlet's* failure to "do it pat;" and the grave-scene is attractive,—telling of the vanity of this life and pointing to another world for the end of these distracting struggles; and we would note *Hamlet's* rebellious anger at the burial of *Ophelia*, which, in seeming temporary triumph, nearly dethrones ✓ his reason. Open the play at random, and upon every page the wit, the wisdom, the acts and speech, and even "the wild and whirling words" of Shakespeare's hero illustrate the theme as we have surmised it. The tragedy is not that which culminates in the death of a victim. It is a spiritual tragedy. All the principal characters die—but all by *accident*; all

except the one who was not "passion's slave,"—*Horatio*.

Nothing is plainer than that Shakespeare will not stoop to the explanation of his own thought. He cannot be convicted, either here or elsewhere, of conscious exposition of his own performances. He respects the intelligence of the spectators of his dramas; and so the critic who would catch the meaning of the play from the apparently palpable expressions of it uttered by the characters themselves will surely go astray. He who listens to the open declarations of the "foolish, prating knave" *Polonius*, and accepts them as evidence, will certainly be misled. Notwithstanding this, we must admit that, as the author makes the hero say:

"The players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all,"

and so, without further consecutive elaboration of scenes and theory, we quote

fearlessly from the play at large to support our view.

*Hamlet* to his father's ghost, in his mother's chamber and in her presence, asks :

"Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
That, laps'd in time and *passion*, lets go by  
The important acting of your dread command?"

*Laertes* tells us more than he knew, when he says to *Ophelia*, speaking of *Hamlet*: "His will is not his own." The Prince seconds him in it:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will."

And what *Hamlet* did for his mother the author does for the spectator: he "sets you up a glass where you may see the inmost part of you." Shakespeare "speaks by the card" when he makes his hero utter:

"What is a man,  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.

Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not  
That capability and god-like reason  
To fust in us unus'd."

*Ophelia's* genuine madness is the triumph of a single passion over will or reason. We have the judgment of the *King*, who says of it:

"O! this is the poison of deep grief."

The clown tells *Hamlet* that the loss of his wits will not be seen in him in England, for there the men are as mad as he. This is irony which an English audience could not mistake, for otherwise the play of "Hamlet" would have shared the fate of the speech which he says "pleased not the million." If such a speech were enacted, and the audience understood that the hero was really insane, it would not have been acted in England, "or if it were, not above once."

In the play within the play, a dozen or

sixteen lines of which were *Hamlet's*, we have some light. The *Player King* says :

“ What to ourselves in passion we propose,  
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.  
The violence of either grief or joy  
Their own enactures with themselves destroy :  
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament ;

Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.  
This world is not for aye ; nor 'tis not strange  
✓ That even our loves should with our fortunes  
change ;

For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,  
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.

Our wills and fates do so contrary run,  
That our devices still are overthrown ;  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our  
own.”

If *Horatio* ever did—as he was bidden by *Hamlet* to do—tell the story of the prince ; or, if he ever reported him and his cause, cruel oblivion has swallowed and suppressed it. The efforts of *Guil-denstern* to pluck out the heart of his mys-



tery, futile then, have been emulated through the centuries. Yet *Hamlet's* hint that he was an "instrument" has been unheeded, unless (which is unlikely) Dr. Johnson intended to express the thought when he wrote, "*Hamlet* is through the whole piece rather an instrument than an agent." The Prince scorned the attempt to play upon him by the euphuistic courtier, but *Hamlet* yielded with rapture to the touch of the master-hand of his creator; and, so played upon by Shakespeare, he did discourse most excellent music—music that will enchant humanity till millennium.

"Would not this, sir," even without a "forest of feathers," or even if the rest of his fortunes should "turn Turk" with him, or without "two provincial roses" on his "razed shoes," get him "a fellowship in a cry of players, sir"? Yes, a whole share!

And now comes *Fortinbras*; let him answer our query. *Horatio's* proposition to place all the bodies high on a *stage* gives him the hint, and so,—with Shake-

speare's quaint habit of making his characters play on words, even in critical or serious situations,—he says:

“ Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the *stage*;  
For he was likely, had he been *put on*,  
To have *proved* most royally.”

Is not this Shakespeare's own hint as to the mystery of “Hamlet”? The author was about concluding a play which was to be, and has been, the seeming puzzle of literature. He had made *Hamlet* the patron of players, nay, their companion, familiar in speech and action. He had made him magnify the dramatic calling in open declaration, and publish his own familiarity with it by criticisms upon the travelling players, while his own recitations from the play “which pleased not the million” elicited the praises of the prime minister. He had made him appear as a playwright and manager, and caused him to teach the dramatic art in

eloquent phrase; and, as to a master, the players listened to him—players recognized and lauded as the leaders of the dramatic stage. Shakespeare, himself an actor, could not withhold his benediction on his darling child as he took his leave of him, and so he hints through *Fortinbras* that *Hamlet* was a player: to have stated it plainly would have been in his day an offence to royalty, and probably would have imperilled the success of the work if it did not the life of the author.

The Master-Dramatist's favorite *dramatis persona* was, not a possible Prince, but a Player, acting the part that typifies Humanity, in a play that sets forth Man's spiritual life in worldly conditions under pressure of the law of the Supernatural.

Here then is an actor within an actor; a play within a play; and a drama of the inner man.

#### IV.

#### *Suggestive Parallelisms.*

" You can't persuade Professor Flam  
Of modern man's originality ;  
He says that Tennyson's a sham  
And some old heathen the reality.  
In vain the modern muse may show  
Her Christabel,—her Jack and her Gill ;  
Some parallel he's sure to know  
In Homer, Æschylus, or Virgil."

SHAKESPEARE is the undeposed and undying King of Literature. In all the realm of letters he enjoys the right of eminent domain. In his task of discovering the latent springs of man's action, he unreservedly appropriated the creations of other minds. The light which his genius borrowed from other fires was not absorbed, but, as from a gem, it was returned in more resplendent rays. His mind was a world teeming with a world's variety, and peopled with a host not all of whom

were "native" there. With supernatural insight this Jupiter of Dramatists scanned the human heart and mind; and, in the revelations of their mysteries, he did not hesitate to use the figures which other men had furnished. Long before the publication of "Hamlet," he merited and received this published tribute:

"As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare."

It is not without profit, certainly not without pleasure, that we may trace the parallels of the thought and expression of our world's poet with those of the ancient god favored mortals who delighted and instructed the minds of the Golden Age. The lines of light which illumine the sixteenth century are not less beautiful, for the Grecian hues and Roman colors with which they are blended. Shakespeare loses none of his own charms when he

echoes the melodies of ancient song or mingles them with his own creations in immortal harmonies. It may be he had "small Latin and less Greek;" certain it is, he knew many Greeks and more Romans. Euripides and Sophocles, Ovid and Virgil, and their literary offspring, were his familiar companions.

Nor was Shakespeare alone among the great "masters" in this free-handed fellowship of borrowing from his imaginative associates the ready currency of the realm of letters. Homer was the source from which Sophocles and Virgil drew many of their plots and thoughts; and, by their treatment of these, made themselves immortal as Homer. Their works were not mere parallels. Homer's pupils unblushingly divested his creations of their antique attire, and dressed them in the garb more fitting to the taste of their admirers of another age. Dryden says: "The poet who borrows nothing from others is yet to be born." Free use in the drama of what

was open to all the world had high precedent before Shakespeare. It was even approved and recommended by Horace in his Epistle on the Art of Poetry. He says, as Sir Theodore Martin interprets him :

" If, leaving well-tried tracks in drama, you  
Would sketch some character that's wholly new,  
Be sure t'is in the mould of nature cast,  
And to itself is true from first to last.  
'Tis hard, on things familiarly known,  
To stamp such traits as make them quite your  
own.

Still, for your play, 'tis better to employ  
The well-known phases of the tale of Troy,  
Than be the first in drama to unfold  
Things until now unheard of and untold.  
Into possession, too, you will reduce  
Materials that are free for all men's use,  
If only you take care you are not found  
Pacing the vile old tedious mill-horse round ;  
Nor try, by slavish emulation stirred,  
To reproduce your Homer word for word ;  
Nor, sticking all too closely to his text,  
In fetters move, tame, halting, and perplex'd."

If Shakespeare needs justification, he finds it among the masters of his art. It

was in common with other great writers that he was apt in finding material for his imagination to fashion anew, not only in the phenomena of all realms of existence, but also in the "shapes," the "local habitations," and the "names" which former poets had given to "airy nothings" by their creative powers. There is fascination in tracing the concurrences of thought and coincidences of phraseology between "Hamlet" and certain famous classics of that elder day, in which the aims of the authors are more apparent ; and they furnish rich surface-indications of a continuous vein of interior purpose. Especially may this be said of the parallelisms between "Hamlet" and both the "Electra" of Sophocles and Virgil's "Æneid." The "Electra" shows man driven in personal career by the dark-browed Fates ; the "Æneid," man, in a larger, more typical sphere, as servant of the State, forced by the gods to self-denial for the public weal. These lines, and their palpable pro-



jection in "Hamlet"—in recurrent elements and incidents, thoughts and phrases—seem to shut us up to the belief that the mind that produced "Hamlet" was powerfully affected to sympathetic action by those ancient works of Greece and Rome.

This finds additional force in the singular paganism, if we may so say,—certainly the absence of Christian or religious motive,—in "Hamlet." A chief element is evidently that which is prominent in the "Electra" and the "Æneid"—*the irresistible power of the supernal upon man.*

With this in view, let us trace in "Hamlet," Shakespeare's greatest work, some of the resemblances—too frequent and striking to be fortuitous—to the productions already mentioned: and first, the tragedy of "Electra."

*Agamemnon* was the King of Mycenæ; *Ægisthus* was an adopted son of *Atræus*, *Agamemnon's* father. *Ægisthus* slew *Agamemnon* and married with *Clytemnestra*,

his queen. *Electra*, daughter of the King, mourned her father's death, and denounced the marriage of her mother with *Ægisthus*; and, never reconciled, was ill-treated by her uncle, murderer of the King and wearer of his crown. *Orestes*, brother of *Electra*, bidden by the god of Delphi to revenge his father's death, sought out and slew the murderer. The almost exact similarity of this general dramatic motive to that of "Hamlet" need not be enlarged upon.

The private interview between *Electra* and the queen, in which the daughter denounced her mother's marriage and the part she had played with *Ægisthus*, finds parallel with that in which *Hamlet* addressed to his mother, in her chamber, words more forcible, but not less unmistakable. Each "spoke daggers" to the mother, but used none.

The contemporaneous tragedian Euripides also treated this same subject in his drama of the same title; and when he

makes *Electra* speak to others of the shameless haste in which her royal mother's marriage followed the murder of her husband, the chorus interjected :

"Mere chance rules the nuptials of women,"

—as in contempt of the idea that faithful love had anything to do with it. When Shakespeare had led his "melancholy prince" into the contemplation of the "wicked speed" with which the marriage of his mother with his father's brother "followed hard upon" the late King's murder, it is made the occasion for *Hamlet* to ejaculate :

"Frailty, thy name is woman."

In the light of this similarity of thought and expression, evoked by circumstances almost identical, who will question the appropriateness of *Ophelia's* remark to *Hamlet*, as he interpreted the play to her,

"You are as good as a *chorus*, my lord" ?

When Sophocles had brought his prince, *Orestes*, in the mission to revenge his father's death, where opportunity was presented to dispatch the usurper—*Ægisthus*, husband to the guilty queen, *Orestes'* mother—the young man deliberately deferred the act, that he might kill the king when his sufferings after death would be greater and more certain :

“*Orestes* [to *Ægisthus*]. Go thou within, and  
quickly. Now our strife  
Is not of words, but for thy life itself.

*Ægisthus*. Why dost thou force me in? If  
this be right,  
What need of darkness? Why not slay at once?

*Orestes*. Give thou no orders, but where thou  
didst slay  
My father, go, that thou too there may'st die.

. . . . .

*Ægisthus*. Dost think I'll flee?

*Orestes*. Thou must not die the death thou  
wouldst desire ;

I needs must make it bitter.”

Shakespeare's hero-prince comes upon the sought-for victim of his revenge ; he

draws his sword, and a bloody deed seems imminent; but he reflects, and procrastinates, and thus excuses to himself his want of action :

“ Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
And now I'll do't.—And so he goes to  
heaven;  
And so am I reveng'd. That would be  
scann'd:  
A villain kills my father; and for that,  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.  
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.  
He took my father grossly, full of bread,  
With all his crimes broad blown, as fresh as  
May;  
And how his audit stands who knows save  
heaven?  
But in our circumstance and course of  
thought,  
'Tis heavy with him; and am I then reveng'd,  
To take him in the purging of his soul,  
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?  
No!  
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:  
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,

. . . . .

At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
That hath no relish of salvation in't;  
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at  
heaven,  
And that his soul may be as damn'd and  
black  
As hell, whereto it goes."

It would not be "to consider too curiously" to trace this horrid conception from where it appeared in the simple garb which the Grecian wove to where it sports in flowing habiliments fashioned by the "Bard of Avon." To kill a father's murderer fills full the cup of human revenge; but to blast his soul, and inflict upon the victim a punishment after death, is of the Evil One. This idea is not so strange in *Hamlet* as in *Orestes*; for, of himself, *Hamlet* says :

" Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell."

Look now at the sophistical and un-  
availing consolation to *Electra*, mourning  
for her dead

"Death is the lot of all.

.   .   .   .   .   .

Thou, O Electra, take good heed, wast born  
Of mortal father; mortal, too, Orestes;  
Yield not too much to grief. To suffer thus  
Is common lot of all."

What says the *Queen* to *Hamlet*?—

"Do not forever with thy veiled lids,  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives  
must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity."

And *Hamlet* echoes:

"Ay! Madam, it is common."

Against the protestations of the *Chorus*,  
*Electra* defends her mourning for the  
dead; and *Hamlet's* argument is to the  
same effect.

The sorrowful princess *Electra* deeply  
bewailed the fact that she was bound  
to own the guilty *Clytemnestra* as her  
mother; so *Hamlet*, addressing his mother,  
says:

"You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;  
And—would it were not so!—you are my mother."

*Hamlet's* first act resulting in a death was the killing of *Polonius* behind the arras. The prince "whips out his rapier" and plunges it through the curtain, and we hear the cry of the "unseen good old man" from behind the scenes: "O, I am slain." Then *Hamlet*, conscious that he has killed a human being, asks his mother: "Is it the King?" in tone and manner indicating that he wished it were his uncle. Thus *Orestes*, after revealing himself to his sister, passes from the stage, and presently from behind the scenes we hear the cry of *Clytemnestra*: "Ah! I am smitten;" while *Electra*, on the stage, upon hearing the last words of the victim of *Orestes'* sword,—“Ah! blow on blow,”—with *Hamlet's* quickness, and in his revengeful spirit, mutters: "Would that *Ægisthus* shared them!"



The use of answers with double meanings, to deceive the other characters of the drama while showing the truth to the spectator, is common to both these plays. To baffle her murderous uncle *Ægisthus*, *Electra* answered his inquiries, speaking truth and yet deceiving him by the use of words of double meaning. It had been reported that *Orestes* was slain in the wreck of the chariots; ashes in an urn had been brought to the house of *Clytemnestra*; a detailed account of the death had been given by the attendant; the living *Orestes* (in disguise) and his attendant had been welcomed as guests of the *Queen*, and he had revealed himself to his sister *Electra*, cautioning her to conceal his identity and the fact of his return. Immediately after the scene in which *Clytemnestra* is slain, *Ægisthus* approaches and *Electra* thrusts *Orestes* behind the scenes to conceal him from *Ægisthus*. We shall see how she proves herself equal to the occasion by seemingly alluding

to *Orestes'* dead body, when it was himself in life that she had seen.

*Ægisthus.* Who knows of you where they,  
from Phokis come,  
May now be found, who bring, they tell me,  
news

That our *Orestes* has breath'd out his last,  
In wreck of chariot storm? Thee, thee I  
ask—

Yes, thee, still wont to be of old so brave.  
As I suppose it touches thee the most,  
So thou, knowing most, may'st tell me what  
I seek.

*Electra.* I know. How else? Could I then  
stand aloof  
From that dear chance of those who most  
are mine?

*Ægisthus.* Where are the strangers, then?  
Tell this to me.

*Electra.* Within; for they have found a loving  
hostess.

*Ægisthus.* And did they say distinctly he was  
dead?

*Electra.* Ah, no. They showed him not in  
words alone.

*Ægisthus.* And is he here that we may see  
him plain?

*Electra.* 'Tis here, a most unwelcome sight  
to see.

*Ægisthus.* Against thy wont thou giv'st us  
joy indeed.

*Electra.* Thou may'st rejoice, if this be  
ground of joy."

*Hamlet's* first utterance in the play was his interruption of the *King* addressing him:

"*King.* But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

*Hamlet* [aside]. A little more than kin, and less than kind.

*King.* How is it that the clouds still hang on you ?

*Hamlet.* Not so, my lord ; I am too much i' the sun."

Whether this means "too careless and idle" as some think, or, according to an old proverb—"Out of heaven's blessing into the warm sun"—disinherited and a rover, the effect is the same ; it baffles the *King's* inquiry. The artifice of replying in language of double meaning was resorted to by *Hamlet* before any revelation of the crime ; and it was apparently employed to conceal his

thought. Such use of words was not designed to induce a belief in his uncle that he was deranged; it was before any such suspicion attached to him. But the utterance was calculated to lead the mind of *Hamlet's* listener away from a knowledge or suspicion of his uneasiness of mind, while at the same time revealing *Hamlet's* mental action and agitation to the spectator of the drama. *Hamlet* resorts to the same device with *Marcellus* and *Horatio* when they find him after the revelations of the ghost. He was not then feigning insanity, whatever he may have done later; he was simply putting forth words so uttered as to hide his thoughts from his listeners—not to publish them as insane vagaries. So, too, in the interview with *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern*. His purpose, as a person of the drama, was to conceal his thoughts; Shakespeare's purpose, to cause him to exhibit mental agitation. It is intended, too, that *Polonius*, in his attempt to sound

*Hamlet*, shall appear to be deceived by devices that he, as a diplomatist, would naturally employ; his inference is a blunder of his own. The spectator of the drama, however, is not deceived; to him the mind of *Hamlet* is open.

*King Ægisthus* and his *Queen* well knew that there was something in the soul of the mourning princess that might bring them into peril. *Chrysothemis*, *Electra's* sister, says to her :

“ All I know

Myself, I'll tell thee ; for their purpose is,  
Unless thou ceaseest from thy wailings loud,  
To send thee where thou never more shalt see  
The light of day.”

So *King Claudius*, perceiving by *Hamlet's* actions that there was something in his soul “o'er which his melancholy sat on brood,” and that “the hatch and the disclose would be some danger,” resolved to treat him in the same way.

*Electra* complains of *Orestes'* halting in

the execution of his promise of revenge.  
She says of him :

“ For he, still ever meaning to effect  
Some great achievement, brings to nothingness  
All my hopes here, and all hopes far away.”

Again :

“ He speaks of coming ; yet he nothing does.”  
So *Hamlet's* self-condemnation was, over  
and again, the same that *Electra* visited  
on *Orestes*, and for the same fault.

The *Chorus* thus encourages *Electra* :

*Cho.* “ Take heart, my child, take heart :  
Mighty in heaven He dwells,  
Zeus, seeing, guiding all.”

*Hamlet* puts this :

“ There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

*Hamlet* was, at times, weighed down  
with grief and suffered from

“ The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune ; ”  
and to end

“ The heartache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to ”

was "a consummation" he "devoutly wished." *Electra*, in like despondency, cries out :

"I'll thank him if he kill me ; should I live  
There is but sorrow : wish for life is none ;"

and she speaks, in the same connection, of her life as

" Filled full of grievous fears,  
And bitter, hateful ills."

We have then, in both these tragedies, the treacherous Queen ; the lecherous fratricide ; the marriage of the murderer with the widow ; their seizure of the throne ; the mourning child bewailing in uncomforted sorrow and, in open terms, denouncing the incestuous and speedy marriage, and seeking out revenge with vigorous will to compass it, but confessedly too weak to do the act ; and the son of the murdered King supernaturally prompted to revenge his father's death, together with its final accomplishment. Shakespeare did not need the story of

Saxo Grammaticus to hint or suggest the skeleton of his play which he clothed with flesh. It may be, Saxo Grammaticus did need the Greek drama to suggest his story.

The parallelisms of the play of "Hamlet" with the "Æneid" are not less striking than those with the "Electra." The "Æneid" is a picture of the life of the typical Roman. Man, from the Roman standpoint, was a being whose life and activity were governed and directed by the gods, to the sole end of benefiting the State. Such a being was *Æneas*.

"Arms and the man I sing

. . . . .

Striving his city's walls to build."

The fate of *Palinurus*, made a pilot of *Æneas'* fleet only to be lost when seemingly a human guide was indispensable, reveals the absolute dependence of the band upon the care and guidance of the



gods. Virgil had a higher aim than simply to please the Roman people by tracing their origin to the gods; more exalted than to construct a picture and frame which should flatter the reigning monarch Augustus, and grander than the depiction of an abstract character, the offspring of his own imagination. He painted the ideal Roman. Man to him was an instrument in the hands of the gods, employed solely for the glory of the State. Self-sacrifice, patriotism, and implicit obedience to the will of the gods, are the qualities which magnify the hero, and the marvellous illustration of these qualities in the poem accounts for its universal popularity and immortality. The principal elements of the poem are: the gods, man, and the State. In action: the dynamic force or motive power and guide, the instrument or means, and the end. Man is for the State and the State for the gods. A better civilization would reverse the picture from Virgil, presenting man as

the end, and the State the means. The end of the State should be man's temporal welfare, and the aim of man's life noble character, in anticipation of the "something after death;" but the Roman poet wrought upon the Roman ideal.

Virgil's hero was not of the "common herd." Like *Orestes* before and *Hamlet* after him, *Aeneas* was a prince, and endowed with all the noblest qualities of mind and body.

"A very god in face and chest."

Shakespeare's hero was

"The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's eye, tongue,  
sword,  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers."

We first behold *Aeneas* in the midst of dire calamities. The King was murdered and *Aeneas'* brilliant hopes were blasted.

"It was the hour when Heaven gives rest  
To every man, the first and best."

The new object of attainment, the commission which was to fill his life, was received supernaturally from the ghost of *Hector*, who appeared and was thus addressed by *Aeneas* :

"O daystar of Dardanian land !  
 O faithful heart, unconquered hand !  
 What means this lingering ? From what shore  
 Comes Hector to his home once more ?  
 . . . . .

What cause has moved that clear, calm mien ?  
 Or why those wounds, so ghastly green ? "

The answer was the dread commission to *Aeneas*, to execute which was to be, and was, his only aim in life thereafter :

"The gods of her domestic shrines  
 That country to your care consigns ;  
 Receive them now, to share your fate ;  
 Provide them mansions strong and great,  
 The city's walls, which heaven has willed,  
 Beyond the seas you yet shall build."

We can read between the lines and later in his life *Aeneas*' response. The "melancholy prince" first dawns upon our vision

amidst like surroundings. His royal father had been

Of life, of crown and queen at once dispatched,"

the State was disordered, and the *Ghost* of the murdered King appeared at night to his distracted son, who reverently addressed the majestic spectre and, *Æneas*-like, asked why it thus appeared and what he himself should do. In answer the *Ghost* imparted a commission which was as sacred to *Hamlet* as was the command of *Hector* to *Æneas*; and to its execution *Hamlet* was as true.

Each of these two hero-princes took upon himself the performance of the ghostly bidding and, to execute it, each devoted all his powers thereafter, at the sacrifice of all lesser things, and especially all personal desires. *Æneas* left his home and wandered long, yielding all selfish indulgences, to do what *Hector's* ghost commanded. *Hamlet* promises:

"Yea, from the table of my memory  
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,  
 That youth and observation copied there ;  
 And thy commandment all alone shall live  
 Within the book and volume of my brain,  
 Unmixed with baser matter."

Each of our heroes is suddenly immersed  
 in dire calamities, and each covets death  
 as a refuge from his trials. *Æneas* cries :

"O, happy, thrice and yet again,  
 Who died at Troy like valiant men,  
     E'en in their parents' view !  
 O Diomed, first of Greeks in fray,  
 Why press'd I not the plain that day,  
     Yielding my life to you,  
 Where stretched beneath a Phrygian sky  
 Fierce Hector, tall Sarpedon lie :  
 Where Simois tumbles 'neath his wave  
 Shields, helms, and bodies of the brave?"

*Hamlet* prays :

"O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew !  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter !"

When the epic poet brings his hero into  
 the court of *Dido*, the Carthaginian queen,

after his interview with his mother *Venus*, he represents *Æneas* wrapped in clouds by the power of the goddess. *Æneas'* presence, his aims and purposes, are known and understood only by himself and his faithful friend *Achates*. They see the Queen and courtiers and their comrades, but are unseen by them.

Virgil tells us:

“But Venus either traveller shrouds  
With thickest panoply of clouds,  
That none may see them, touch, nor stay,  
Nor, idly asking, breed delay.”

So, too, the later poet wraps a cloud about his hero as he wanders from the presence of his parent's ghost to the court of *Claudius*. The veil which covers him effectually conceals him from the King and Queen and courtiers, and from all except his faithful friend *Horatio*. It is not the miracle of a goddess concealing the body of her son, but it is the covering of thought, the concealment of a mind and its true intent and purposes. The clouds

are words, so skilfully employed that they blind the eyes of others, while the "mind's eye" of the utterer is clear and undimmed. *Hamlet* moves about, enveloped in these clouds of words, mystifying all observers with the utterances of a mind perturbed. The very thought of Virgil in the device of *Venus* seems to have been in the dramatist's mind when he made the *King* speaking of *Ophelia's* brother *Laertes* returned to the court, say:

"Her brother is in secret come from France,  
Feeds on his wonder, *keeps himself in clouds.*"

*Horatio* was a man of learning, if we may credit the statement of *Marcellus* in the presence of the ghost:

"Thou art a scholar; speak to it, *Horatio.*"

This implied that he was a master of the Latin language, the only appropriate language in which to address a ghost, according to the popular superstition. He evidently was not ignorant of Virgil's story; and living in his memory was

the incident where the ghost of *Sichæus* appeared to Dido :

“ And shows, to aid her on her way,  
His buried treasures, stores untold  
Of silver and of massy gold.”

For when he addresses the royal spirit of Denmark's murdered King, he says :

“ Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life  
Extorted treasure in the womb of Earth,  
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,  
Speak of it ; stay, and speak !”

We have already seen how *Hamlet* paused when opportunity was presented to kill the King while he was at the *altar*, praying, how

“ his sword  
Seemed i' the air to stick.”

So, as a mirrored *Pyrrhus*, *Hamlet* stood,

“ And like a neutral to his will and matter  
Did nothing.”

Hear *Æneas* tell his own story :

“ I stood alone, when lo ! I mark  
In Vesta's temple crouching dark  
The traitress Helen . . .



She, Troy's and Argos' common fiend,  
 Sat cowering by the *altar* screen'd.  
 My blood was fir'd : fierce passion woke  
 To quit Troy's fall by one sure stroke."

Yet neither of them did it "pat" when  
 the victim "was praying." *Hamlet*-like,  
*Aeneas* fell to musing as to what would  
 become of *Helen* in case he refrained  
 from killing her, and while he was thus  
 speculating—he calls it

"raving past control,  
 In aimless turbulence of soul—"

*Helen's* life, like that of *Claudius*, was  
 saved by the avenger's introspection.  
*Aeneas* proceeds with his account of the  
 incident, introducing a new "reminder":

"My mother flash'd upon my sight,  
 Confess'd a goddess, with the mien  
 And stature that in heaven are seen :  
 Reproachfully my hand she press'd,  
 And thus from roseate lips address'd :

. . . . .  
 What mean you by this madness ?  
 . . . . .

Behold ! For I will purge the haze  
That darkles round your mortal gaze  
And blunts its keenness—mark me still,  
Nor disobey your mother's will."

So *Hamlet*, in his mother's chamber, needs  
and receives the chiding of his father's  
ghost, who says :

" This visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose."

*Æneas*, tardy also in execution of his  
great commission, receives the prompt-  
ings of his father's ghost to that end :

" Now sable night invests the sky,  
When lo ! descending from on high  
The semblance of Anchises seemed  
To give him counsel as he dreamed."

In " *Hamlet* " we have the " stars with  
trains of fire " in the list of omens " pre-  
cursé of fierce events " enumerated by the  
Latin scholar *Horatio*; and Virgil tells us  
of *Acestes* shooting in the air,—

" to show  
His veteran skill and sounding bow :

. . . . .  
E'en in the mid expanse of skies  
The arrow kindles as it flies,

Behind it draws a fiery glare,  
Then wasting, vanishes in air :  
So stars, dislodged, athwart the night  
Career, and trail a length of light.  
In wonder either nation gazed,  
Their souls to heaven in prayer uprais'd,  
Nor great Æneas dared disown  
The omen by the gods foreshown."

We may not be surprised at *Horatio* referring to the omens "a little ere the mightiest Julius fell ;" for he was not only a scholar, but he confesses himself to *Hamlet* in Act v. Scene 2 :

" No, I am more an antique Roman than a Dane."

The pious *Æneas* never tired of speaking praises of his father. His filial reverence was a marked feature of his character. He bore him on his shoulders from the burning city of Troy, and, burdened thus, he missed and lost his wife, who he assumed was following. Prominent in the character of *Hamlet* was the same filial devotion. The parallel between these characters in this respect is manifest throughout.

Each seeks an interview with his father's ghost, and the revelations coming from the dead are almost identical. To *Hamlet* thus speaks his father's ghost :


"I am thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night  
And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am  
forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young  
blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their  
spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part  
And each particular hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

He tells him of the burning and purging of the foul crimes done in the body, and then kindles the imagination to light up scenes which Virgil painted and which Dante reproduced and elaborated. *Aeneas* receives the teachings of his father's ghost to the same effect :

"Nay, when at last the life has fled,  
And left the body cold and dead,  
E'en then there passes not away  
The painful heritage of clay ;  
Full many a long contracted stain  
Perforce must linger deep in grain,  
So penal sufferings they endure  
For ancient crime to make them pure :  
Some hang aloft in open view  
For winds to pierce them through and through,  
While others purge their guilt deep-dyed  
In burning fire or whelming tide."

*Anchises* did not hesitate "to tell the secrets of his prison-house," and the Roman poet "unfolds a tale" which could not fail to harrow up the soul of *Æneas* or even a less susceptible nature. Shakespeare stimulates the imagination and makes each listener divine "the secrets of the prison-house" for himself.

There is evidence to show that this interview between *Æneas* and the spirit of *Anchises* was living in the mind of Shakespeare when he revised, if not when he wrote, the play of "Hamlet," for we find



following the interview, *Anchises* showing  
*Æneas* the line of his descendants.

“See yon gallant youth advance  
Leaning upon a headless lance?  
He next in upper air holds place,  
First offspring of the Italian race  
Commixed with ours, your latest child  
By Alban name of Silvius styled,  
Whom to your eye Livinia fair  
In sylvan solitude shall bear,  
King, sire of kings, by whom comes down  
Through Trojan hands the Alban crown.  
Nearest to him see Procas shine,  
The glory of Dardania's line,  
And Numitor and Capys too,  
And one that draws his name from you,  
Silvius Æneas, mighty he  
Alike in arms and piety,  
Should Fate's high pleasure e'er command  
The Alban sceptre to his land.  
Look how they bloom in youth's fresh flower!  
What promise theirs of martial power!  
Mark you the civic wreath they wear,  
The oaken garland in their hair?  
These, these are they, whose hands shall crown  
The mountain heights with many a town,  
Shall Gabii and Nomentum rear,  
There plant Collatia, Cora here,

And leave to after years their stamp  
On Bola and on Inuus' camp ;  
Names that shall then be far renown'd,  
Now nameless spots of unknown ground.  
There to his grandsire's fortune clings  
Young Romulus, of Mars' true breed ;  
From Ilias' womb the warrior springs,  
Assaracus' authentic seed.  
See in his helm the double crest,  
The token by his sire impressed,  
That marks him out betimes to share  
The heritage of upper air.  
Lo ! by his fiat called to birth •  
Imperial Rome shall rise,  
Extend her reign to utmost earth,  
Her genius to the skies,  
And with a wall of girdling stone  
Embrace seven hills herself alone—  
Blest in an offspring, wise and strong :  
So through great cities rides along  
The mighty Mother, crown'd with towers,  
Around her knees a numerous line,  
A hundred grandsons, all divine,  
All tenants of Olympian bowers.  
Turn hither now your ranging eye :  
Behold a glorious family,  
Your sons, and sons of Rome :  
Lo ! Cæsar there and all his seed  
Iulus' progeny, decreed  
To pass 'neath heaven's high dome.

This, this is he, so oft the theme  
Of your prophetic fancy's dream,  
Augustus Cæsar, Jove's own strain ;  
Restorer of the age of gold  
In lands where Saturn ruled of old :  
O'er Ind and Garamant extreme  
Shall stretch his boundless reign."

So in "Macbeth" (a later production than "Hamlet") Shakespeare makes the murderous usurper demand of the witches to know whether *Banquo's* issue will ever reign in the kingdom. Eight kings appear and pass over the stage in order, the last with a glass in his hands, *Banquo* following.

*Macbeth*: "Thou art too like the spirit of  
Banquo; down!  
Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs; and thy hair,  
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first,—  
A third is like the former. Filthy hags!  
Why do you show me this? A fourth? Start,  
eyes!  
What! will the line stretch 'out to the crack of  
doom?  
Another yet? A seventh?—I'll see no more.  
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass,  
Which shows me many more; and some I see,



That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry,  
Horrible sight! Now, I see, 'tis true;  
For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,  
And points at them as his."

These eight royal descendants of *Banquo* are shown to *Macbeth*; to *Aeneas* eight kings are shown and named. It may seem a trifling coincidence that in each case there should be supernaturally exhibited to the human inquirer eight unborn royal descendants; yet, since it appears in no other plays, to my knowledge, it is to me strongly corroborative of Shakespeare's use of classic material. The revision or enlargement of the play of "*Hamlet*" is sufficiently evidenced in the preface to the edition of 1623.

How certain it is that in the fierce passion of the Roman hero for the Carthaginian queen and his abrupt and unexplained sacrifice of his love by force of the great duty to which his body, soul, and mind were all committed, *Aeneas* found in *Hamlet* a sympathetic successor!

The later hero too had deeply loved, and in his great devotion to his father's command he sacrificed his love ; *Dido* and *Ophelia* shared fates not unlike.

*Æneas* courted, loved, and would have wedded with the Carthaginian queen. Why not ? Here were power, wealth, and a royal wife for a shipwrecked and disheartened prince. It could not be, however, for these delights were at war with the execution of the great commission of his life. He abruptly, harshly, and without explanation, tears himself away from the courtly *Dido* and leaves the coast, and only after *Dido's* suicide, evidencing her insanity, did he explain to her that it was against his will and in obedience to the command of the ghost of *Hector* that he deserted her. When attended by the *Sibyl* in the lower regions, he meets the spirit of the unhappy *Dido*, and thus explains to her the cause of his reluctant flight :

“By heaven, by all that dead men keep  
In reverence here 'mid darkness deep,  
Against *my will*, ill-fated fair,  
    I parted from your land.  
The gods, at whose command to-day  
Through these dim shades I take my way,  
Tread the waste realm of sunless blight  
And penetrate abysmal night,  
They *drove* me forth.”

So also the Prince *Hamlet* courted, loved, and would have wedded with *Ophelia*, the “rose of May.” Mr. Miles writes: “We are not permitted to see *Hamlet* in the ecstasy of love, but what a picture! How he must have loved her, that love should bring him to such a pass! his knees knocking each other! knees that had firmly followed a beckoning ghost. There is more than the love of forty thousand brothers in that hand-grasp of the wrist, in that long gaze at arm's length, in that force that might but will not draw her nearer. And never a word from this King of words! His first great silence; the second is his death.” This

struggle was necessitated by his great commission, similar to that of *Æneas*. *Hamlet's* love was struggling with his will to do that which he had been commanded. He, too, left his chosen lady without a word of explanation for his course, and her life was terminated by her own act in insanity, resulting from his conduct towards her. *Hamlet* would have followed her into the shades below and, "buried quick" within her grave, would thus have attested his devotion and proved to *Ophelia's* spirit that his love was true, seeking to follow where he might have shown that he forsook her, not because he did not love, but because the execution of the command of his father's ghost demanded it.

It is Shakespeare's method to introduce an act or incident to pave the way or seemingly to make suggestion of the speech or scene which follows. The army gathered to recover a piece of land not large enough to furnish burial-ground

for the bodies of the soldiers risking death, is made the text for *Hamlet's* comments on his own shortcomings, and the player weeping for the hapless *Hecuba* points the prince's soliloquy upon his own inaction.

It was not strange that *Hamlet* was delighted with the play which "pleased not the million." He tells us enough of it to indicate that it treated of *Virgil's* hero. After commendatory comments on the play he says :

"One speech in it I chiefly loved ; 'twas  
Æneas' tale to Dido ;"—

the great story in a story. Then—in fulfilment of the author's plan to write a play within the play of "Hamlet"—follows *Hamlet's* resolution to have a play before the *King*.

The speech which *Hamlet* recites, and with which he bids the player proceed, is Shakespeare's translation of a part of the "Æneid." It is a liberal translation, but

literal enough for one who had but "little Latin,"—perhaps indeed a paraphrase from some more accurate Englishing of it. Evidently it never would have seen the light if Virgil's will had been executed and his "*Æneid*" burned as he directed.

A marked feature in the character of each of these heroes was procrastination and inaction; and when they did come to action, it was spasmodic and passionate. They first appear in like surroundings, and, as they take their last farewell, we find each wildly striking from sudden impulse, and then he disappears. When last we see *Æneas*, *Turnus* is prostrate on the ground before him :

"Rolling his eyes, *Æneas* stood,  
And check'd his sword, athirst for blood.  
Now faltering more and more he felt  
The human heart within him melt,  
When round the shoulder wreath'd in pride  
The belt of *Pallas* he espied,  
And sudden flash'd upon his view  
Those golden studs so well he knew,

Which Turnus from the stripling tore  
 When breathless on the field he lay,  
 And on his breast in triumph wore,  
 Memorial of the bloody day.  
 Soon as his eyes had gazed their fill  
 On that sad instrument of ill,  
 Live fury kindling every vein,  
 He cries with terrible disdain :  
 ' What ! in my friend's dear spoils arrayed  
     To me for mercy sue ?  
 'Tis Pallas, Pallas guides the blade :  
 From your curs'd blood his injured shade  
     Thus takes the atonement due.'  
 Thus, as he spoke, his sword he drave  
     With fierce and fiery blow  
 Through the broad breast before him spread :  
 The stalwart limbs grow cold and dead :  
 One groan the indignant spirit gave,  
     Then sought the shades below."

*Hamlet* passes from our view in sudden  
 change from playing with foils. Upon  
*Laertes's* confession, he shouts :

"The point  
 Envenomed too ! Then, venom, to thy work !"

He stabs the *King*, and dies.

In these two works, then, we have for  
 heroes—princes ; each the most immedi-

ate to the throne—on whom, in the natural course of events, the election would have fallen. These heroes are created and stand before us equipped with learning and every coveted grace. The reigning monarch is slain, and each son, by fate, deprived of prospective power, while the ghosts of murdered victims impart to them commissions, demanding for their execution absolute self-sacrifice. They shrink from the performance, and each longs for death, at the first trial. They are both impulsive, and both procrastinating. Each is prompted anew by his father's spirit. They rival each other in filial devotion, and learn like lessons from their parents' ghosts. Each loved and found favor with the object of his affections, and each abruptly broke his troth; and the loved of each, broken-hearted, raved and died a suicide. We part from each of these heroes in the presence of the victim of his weapon, driven, not by his steady will, but wildly and by impulse.



And yet, with all his acceptance of the same general theme, and his undeniable utilization of many thoughts, phrases, and even segments of frame-work or plot, Shakespeare rises grandly above both his originals, and presents, as the hero of his drama, not merely an individual driven to deeds of vengeance by the powers above, like *Orestes*, — not merely the citizen, compelled by his ghost-commanded filial conscience to yield his own desires and serve the State, like *Æneas*,—but MAN, the ideal type of that wondrous assemblage of motive-powers which are governed by the will.

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream :  
The genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council : and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection ;” <sup>1</sup>

and the theme of “Hamlet” shows ge-

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<sup>1</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Act. II. Sc. I.

neric Man, his will enforced by the greater will symbolizing Supreme Power of the Supernatural, struggling with the passion-powers of his own nature in "insurrection;" the will striving to obey the supernatural voice, they—each one, ambition, love, pride, revenge, and the whole catalogue of passions—struggling to have their separate wills: so that—

"With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action."

Would you ask with *Olivia* "What kind of man is he?" let *Malvolio* answer, "Why of *mankind*." Or, say with *Portia*, though with broader meaning, "He is *every man*, in *no man*."

## V.

### *Conclusion.*

SHAKESPEARE pondered much the human mind. He created men with abnormal natures, and showed by their conduct, speech, and tragic fates the personal, social, and political ends of those who are "passion's slaves," thus demonstrating what the human mind ought not to be. But his greatest work was to show what the spirit of man is, in this world.

In "Hamlet" he sought to embody the thought that without and above man is a power which has relation to him, and whose mandates constitute the law of his being. He postulated simply the fact of the Supernatural and its relation to man. What that power is, whether the "unknown power" of the modern scientist, or the revealed Creator; what its nature,

other than that it is supernatural, he does not seek to impart. Man is represented as a being endowed with reason, will, and subordinate motive forces—the passions. He strives to follow the supernal law imposed upon him, and is baffled by the lower forces, which either compel him to follow some one of them or keep him in constant and unavailing struggle. Nature and the Supernatural are thus shown at odds;—but without any hint of the Christian attempt to reconcile them.

In this world, man, so organized and constituted, begins his existence and tarries till death; and, while he tarries, he is in anticipation of another or further existence beyond the grave. The end of man's creation is not here, and beyond the veil of death we know not what will be. The poet rests this part of the delineation with the fact simply that we shall be,—that there *is* “something after death.” Here, the state is one of struggle. We “look before and after,” but

our vision is limited by birth in one direction and death in the other.

His purpose is thus to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to *the spiritual life of man, in this world.*

"The proper study of mankind is man," and, from the first, the poets have made him their great theme. Virgil's *Æneas* was Homer's *Ulysses*, naturalized as a Roman. Both were human types. The Roman poet fashioned his hero to represent man as struggling under supernatural influences to the end of building up the State: Homer shows man as a being struggling against the gods to the end of reaching his final rest in his earthly home, the gods being deified human passions. The Grecian poet more nearly approaches the Christian conception of man as a being struggling in sin towards his eternal rest—his home in heaven.

This antagonism between man's will, influenced by his passions, and the all-con-

trolling Will above him, is a theme of never-failing interest in all lands and in all ages. Whenever any poet has fitly portrayed it, his work has lived. Man cherishes every faithful representation of himself, and will not suffer it to die nor its author to be forgotten.

**THE END.**



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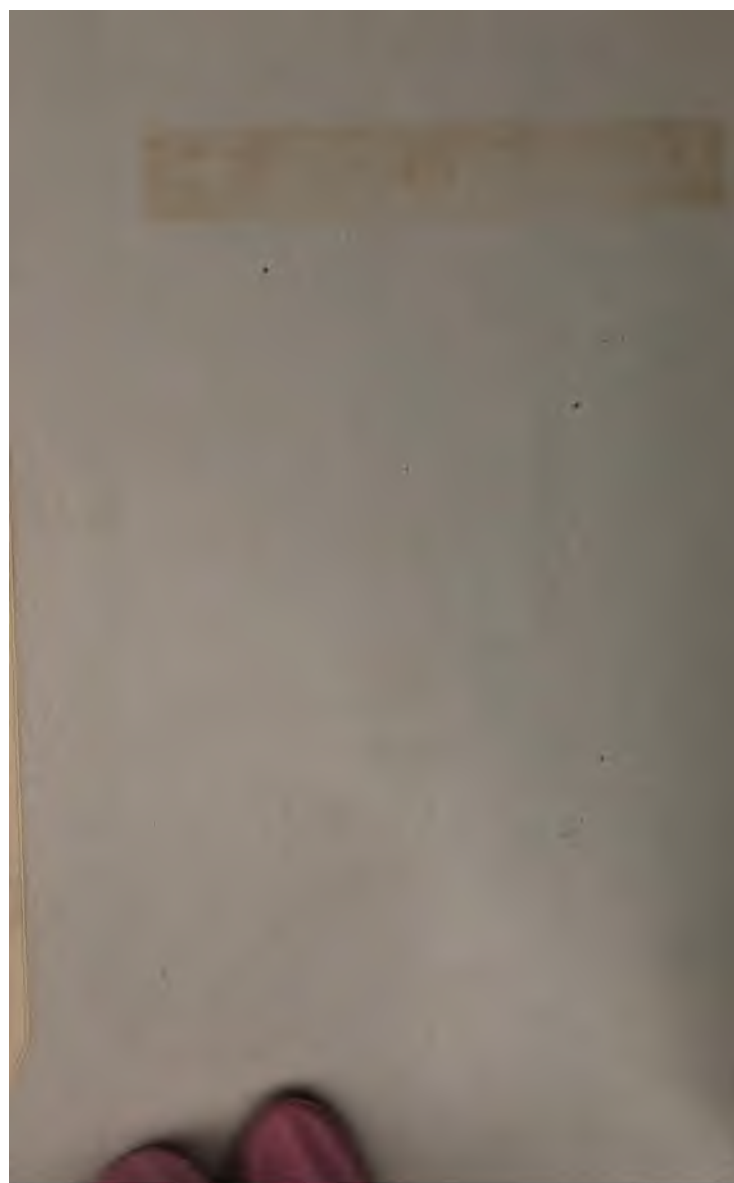












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